



Josep Llinàs and the Construct(ion) of Place Meaning in Urban Public Space: A Barcelona Case Study

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Josep Llinàs and the Construct(ion) of Place Meaning in Urban Public Space: A Barcelona Case Study

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Abstract

Josep Llinàs Carmona, a Catalan architect who trained with Coderch and has practiced and taught in Barcelona since the early 1970s, is recognised internationally for his sensitive approach to architectural design as a means to improve the quality of urban public space. This paper examines how Llinàs integrates architecture with the city, changing how its public spaces function without overemphasising his own buildings; an approach, the paper contends, that differentiates him from many of his peers. The paper combines case study data with Llinàs' own reflections, drawn from primary interviews about his experience of operating and building at the boundary between public and private realms in Barcelona. Unlike many of his contemporaries, the paper argues, Llinàs prioritises shared spaces in a way that highlights the intermediary role that architecture can play between what he calls the nocturnal street of private domains and the diurnal public realm - renouncing the idea of the finished, exact, architectural object.

Llinàs' career as an architect-educator post-Franco is relevant to this paper's focus on extracting lessons from his experience of Barcelona's increasing public/private urban investment policies, leading to the city hosting the 1992 Olympics, and continuing through its renewal and regeneration projects into the new millennium.

Despite many differences, similarities exist between Barcelona's post-Olympic renewal processes, and property-led regeneration across Europe since the late 1990s. Llinàs' trajectory, experiences and stalwart protection of his practice principles throughout this changing context in Barcelona thus provide lessons relevant to international contemporary architecture, development, and critical practice discourse.